(b) whether it is also a fact that these 125 contract labourers are sitting idle without job for the last three years;

(c) if the answer of part (a) and (b) is in affirmative what are the steps taken by Government to see that these contract labourers are engaged in work; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) These are not Railway employees and are contract labours. Railways do not have any such information.

(c) and (d) Engagement in regular service of erstwhile contract labour engaged in Coal and Ash Handling work in loco sheds is under consideration.

Safety measure in Railways

1223. SHRIMATI JAYA PRADA NAHATA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what safety measures have been taken to reduce the Railway accidents which have spurted of late; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) and (b) The following safety measures have been taken after the railway accidents occurred in the recent past:

1. Priority execution of track circuiting on all the trunk route and main line stations.

2. Change in signalling circuitory to prevent slot being given till starter and advance starter signal for the preceding train have been put back to on position.

3. The track structure has been strengthened. The rails have been converted into long welded rail panels by welding and removing fishplates.

4. The communication facility between station staff, driver and guard of running trains will be provided.

5. For monitoring of the track geometry and running characteristics of the track, sophisticated track recording cars, oscilograph cars and portable accelerometers are being progressively used.

6. The condition of rolling stock has been improved. Four-wheeler wagons are being replaced progressively with better bogie Air-brake stock.

7. To prevent cases of cold breakage of axle, all ROH depots have been equipped with ultrasonic testing equipment for timely detection of cases of flaws developing in the axles.

8. The training of staff has been given new thrust with better training facilities like projector, slides, study and discussions of accident cases.

9. Simulators have been installed for training of drivers. Two simulators are working, one each at Kanpur and Tughlakabad. Two more are being imported from Australia.

10. Auxiliary Warning System for giving advance warning about signals at danger to driver of the running train and stopping the train if the driver does not respond within the pre-determined time interval has already been commissioned on Bombay suburban sections.

11. Instant action Groups have been formed on certain nominated trains to check entry of unauthorised passengers in reserved coaches and persons carrying inflammable/explosive materials.

12. The frequency of inspections and surprise checks has been increased. More safety drives have been launched.

13. Detailed instructions have been issued for booking of drivers for working of diverted trains.

14. Intensive safety drive have been launched to educate drivers on not taking of alcohol on duty.

15. Close monitoring on drivers 10 hrs. working rule is being done on various level by higher officers.

Outstanding dues of Railways

1224. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a huge amount of Railways is outstanding for payment by State Electricity Boards and N.T.P.C for coal transportation;

(b) what is the experience of introducing the scheme for advance payment of coal transport charge;

(c) whether new dues are added to the old outstandings dues since this scheme;

(d) what steps are being taken to recover the outstanding amount; and

(e) whether any penalising action is proposed to be taken against the defaulting units?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The prepayment of freight for coal consigned to thermal power stations/State Electricity Boards is working satisfactorily.

(c) There is an accretion in outstanding dues in some Power Houses.

(d) It has been decided that the movement of coal for all Power Houses/State Electricity Boards including Delhi Vidyut Board will be on pre-payment of freight basis w.e.f. 1.10.96 and for Badarpur Thermal Power Plant w.e.f. 1.1.97.

It has also been decided that the past outstanding dues should be adjusted by appropriation from Central Plan Assistance for the concerned States, subject to the maximum of 15% of the CPA which will be distributed on pro-rata basis.

As a result of this decision, Ministry of Finance, Deptt. of Expenditure, has sent a cheque of Rs. 3.85 crore which has been adjusted against various SEBs except BTPP of NTPC & DVB. For getting the outstanding dues cleared against BTPP & DVB, matter has been taken up.

The outstanding dues against DVB & BTPP of NTPC at the end of Dec.' 1996 were Rs. 62.81 crore and Rs. 743.43 crore respectively where as at the end of Sep.' 1997 this amount came down marginally to Rs. 44.77 cr and 742.98 cr respectively.

(e) The defaulting units are penalised by withdrawal of the facility of:

(i) Scheme of Advance Payment of Freight;

(ii) Credit Note cum Cheque;

(iii) 'Weight Only' system.

and they are requested to pay freight to regulate at the booking point through bank drafts.

In addition, action is taken to regulate the supply of wagons for coal traffic of such units to prevent accrual of freight outstanding.

The scheme for pre-payment of freight for coal consigned to Thermal Power Stations/State Electricity Boards was introduced from 1.10.1996 for all such units with the exception of Delhi Electric Supply Undertaking (now rechristened as Delhi Vidyut Board) and Badarpur Thermal Power Station of National Thermal Power Corporation, for whom this scheme was made operative from 1.1.97. With the implementation of Pre-payment Schemes, further accrual of outstanding has been contained to a great extent in respect of most of the power stations and State Electricity Boards with the exception of Delhi Vidyut Board and Badarpur Thermal Power Station, which still continue to accumulate freight outstandings. Action is taken against these units by regulating supply of coal wagons and advance deposit of funds is insisted upon from them so as to eliminate any outstanding on current account. A close monitoring is being done both at Zonal Railways and at the Board's level to ensure that freight outstandings do not